

**AMENDMENTS TO THE ABSTRACT**

Please substitute the following paragraph(s) for the abstract now appearing in the currently filed specification:

A system and method are provided for determining link characteristics in order to calculate the optimal data rate because of a link failure. The system includes a first unit (20, 22) at a first location coupled to one end of each of a plurality of low capacity data links (28) for assisting in determining the characteristics of each of the links (28), a second unit (22, 20) at the second location coupled to the other end of each of the links (28) for assisting in determining the characteristics of each of the links (28) based on the characteristics of the test signal received at the second unit (22, 20), and a processor coupled to the second unit (22, 20) for determining the optimal transmission rate based on the characteristics of the links (28) and the number of links (28) needed to provide the desired transmission rate.